

Zojila project to be bid out for third time

Crisis-hit IL&FS surrenders the ₹6,809-crore contract to build India's longest road tunnel



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New Delhi, 15 January

The Union government is set to invite tenders for a third time for its ambitious Zojila tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir as crisis-hit Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) has surrendered the ₹6,809-crore contract it bagged in 2017.

The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of the road ministry, has begun work for rebidding the project, which is aimed at providing all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.

It is learnt that bids will be invited before the dates for the general election are announced. According to an official in the know, the decision to retender the Zojila project was taken after IL&FS offered to surrender the project, construction on which was yet to commence.

Even though no official communication regarding surrender or retender has been exchanged between the board of IL&FS and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, NHIDCL has been informally given the task of inviting fresh bids, the official quot-

KEY FEATURES

14.2 km

Length of the bi-directional single tube tunnel, which will be India's longest

₹6,809 cr

Capital cost of the project, of which ₹4,899 crore constitutes civil construction cost

7 years Expected time of completion

15 minutes Time required to cross the Zojila pass, as against over 3 hours at present

- The tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh
- It will have uninterrupted power supply, CCTV monitoring, traffic logging equipment, emergency telephone system, etc.

ed above said.

In October 2018, the central government took control of the management of IL&FS after the firm defaulted on debt. The new board of IL&FS is headed by Uday Kotak, managing director, Kotak Mahindra Bank. Turn to Page 6 ▶